



Perris Press Release

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Annual Tree Lighting Starts the Holiday Season

The City of Perris kicked off the holiday season with its annual Tree Lighting Ceremony, a celebration that included the singing of holiday carols, dance performances and a visit from Jolly Old Saint Nick, who greeted visitors from a one-horse open sleigh.

More than 1,000 Perris residents cheered as Mayor Daryl Busch and City Councilman Julio Rodriguez threw the switch that lighted the holiday tree. Showers fell earlier in the day but when the time came to throw the switch to illuminate the big tree, the weather was clear and the temperature pleasant.

"This is great," Busch said. "The City looks forward to this every year. We love putting on this event, and the community really likes it." Rodriguez said he was excited to see the large turnout.

"It's exciting to see the happy, positive community in Perris come together to celebrate the holidays as a family," Rodriguez said.

One of the highlights of the annual event is the performances of pre-school, elementary and high-school musicians, singers and dancers. This year was no different.

As she has for several years, Belen Reyes led the contingent from the Rays of Sunshine from the Church of God in Banning to Perris, where they performed "Feliz Navidad," "Jingle Bells" and "Go Tell It on the Mountain" for the audience.

Reyes said the 30 2 to 13-year-olds practiced for two months to prepare for the Tree Lighting Ceremony.

"The kids are so excited to be here," Reyes said. "They always love coming to Perris because the people are so friendly. We feel welcome here—we feel the love. We look forward to come here. Perris is always our No. 1 place to sing."

Excitement also was high among the choir from Palms Elementary School. Fifth-grade teacher Carla Hill said the performance took on even greater significance this year because the school's art program has been scaled back due to economics.

"They so love it," Hill said of the chance to sing. "They give it their all. Their little faces get so excited. This is wonderful. We appreciate the chance for the students to come to perform. They're famous—at least for tonight."

The 30 kindergarten-through-sixth graders performed "Santa Claus is Coming to Town," "Jingle Bells" and "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

Boy Scout leader Ray Cisneros brought 20 youngsters from Pack 642, based at St. James Catholic Church. He said the Tree Lighting Ceremony makes it official: The City's holiday celebration has begun.

"This show brings the Christmas spirit to the City," Cisneros said. "The City is 100 percent



Moments after throwing the switch to light the holiday tree, Perris City Councilman Julio Rodriguez and Mayor Daryl Busch stand in front of spectacular sight.

supportive of all our efforts. They give us the chance to perform."

The band from Innovative Horizons Charter School performed "Jingle Bells" as part of their appearance. The ensemble included John Larkin, 12, and Jordan Garcia, 11. The pair said they were delighted to help kick off the holiday season.

"It's fun being on the stage and playing for everyone," said Jordan, who is in sixth grade. "And it's nice getting a picture with Santa."

Seventh-grader John said the performance also highlights the talents of the young musicians.

"It gives us the chance to show everybody how good we are," he said.



Jordan Garcia, 11, and John Larkin, 12, both students from Innovative Horizons Charter School in Perris, perform during the recent Tree Lighting Ceremony in the City, an event that drew more than 1,000 people.



Members of a dance troupe show their holiday spirit during the Tree Lighting Ceremony.



Gali Gutierrez, 3, Efrain Akala, 2, and Rebecca Gonzales, 3, were part of the Rays of Sunshine from the Church of God in Banning who took part in the City of Perris Tree Lighting Ceremony.



The City of Perris holiday tree.